



**Testimony of Leo Paul
First Selectman, Town of Litchfield
Before the
Planning & Development Committee
of the Connecticut General Assembly
February 13, 2015**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of **SB-188, An Act Concerning Mandate Relief**.

Connecticut must act now to relieve some of the burden on our small towns and cities. Unfortunately, efforts to control municipal costs are often frustrated by state mandates that make it almost impossible to reduce budgets or negotiate savings in health care, pension and wage costs. To help our cities and towns meet the difficult challenges of today's economy, meaningful mandate relief must be on the table.

I support the provisions in **SB-188** which will 1) Allow towns to post legal notices on websites; 2) Eliminate the municipal premium tax on health insurance policies; 3) Require probate costs to be paid out of state fees; and 4) Eliminate the property storage mandate. These provisions will help reduce costs for our towns and make it easier to provide residents and businesses with important information.

Although I strongly support the committee's efforts to address mandate relief, the state really needs to begin to address the big ticket mandate relief items, including:

- Adjusting the Prevailing Wage Thresholds;
- Reforming the Binding Arbitration process; and
- Providing relief from the Minimum Budget Requirement that makes it almost impossible for towns to reduce local education budgets.

The prevailing wage mandate results in significantly higher costs for local projects such as salt sheds, garages, pavilions, ball fields and senior centers. Prior to 1991, legislators adjusted the prevailing wage threshold on a six-year schedule to ensure that smaller projects were exempt from the mandate. However, the thresholds (\$100,000 for renovations and \$400,000 for new construction) have not been adjusted for a number of years. Failure to adjust the thresholds for prevailing wage projects to exempt smaller town projects has cost Connecticut towns millions of dollars.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of mandate relief.